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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU  
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1147

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DEPT FOR AF/W (DBANKS)  
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR MARR BN

SUBJECT: BENIN: PRESIDENT YAYI PROMOTES SEVEN MILITARY OFFICERS

REF: A) Cotonou 440; B) Cotonou 494

**¶1.** (U) On August 20, the GOB's Council of Ministers promoted Brigadier General Tissou Felix HESSOU, who has been Benin's Minister of the Interior and Public Security since June 17 (Reftels A and B), and Brigadier General Amoussa Chabi BONI to the rank of Major General, effective December 1, 2007. Colonels Bio Kpo LAFIA, Biscotin DEGAN, Robert GBIAN, Soumano OKE, and Legba Cocou SEMEGAN were promoted to Brigadier General, with the promotions being effective on various dates.

**¶2.** (U) The GOB's official announcement of the promotions read as follows:

"Through these promotions, President Yayi wishes to express his satisfaction with and gratitude to the Benin Armed Forces and to their leaders who have been fulfilling their republican duties in a patriotic spirit in order to establish and strengthen democracy and the rule of law since the national conference of February 1990." It is also believed that the professionalism and competence which the National Army has demonstrated during international peacekeeping operations were also factors in the decision to promote these officers.

**¶3.** (U) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON HESSOU: General Hessou was serving as Chief of Staff to the Ministry of National Defense when President Yayi appointed him Minister of the Interior and Public Security on June 17, 2007. He is an alumnus of the African Center for Strategic Studies Program. In his first public speech as Minister of the Interior and Public Security, he pledged to crack down on violent crime, and since then has been working on a comprehensive strategic security plan to combat crime. He is 54 years old and married.

**¶4.** (U) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON BONI: General Boni received his military training in Algeria, North Korea and France. From 1994 to 2004, he held senior positions in the administration of the National Army. He also actively participated in several peacekeeping missions in Bissau-Guinea and Ctte d'Ivoire. Currently, he is Chief of Staff of the Beninese Armed Forces. He is 51 years old. He is married and has seven children.

**¶5.** (U) BIO NOTES ON GBIAN: General Gbian started his military career in the Ground Forces as Signal Officer before being appointed as the Director of the Quartermasters Headquarters for the Beninese Armed Forces. In April 2006, president Yayi nominated him Chief of Military Staff in his office (Directeur de cabinet militaire). He is 51 years old and is married with 3 children.

**¶6.** (U) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON DEGAN: General Degan's military specialty is the quartermaster corps. He is currently serving as the General Secretary of the Ministry of National Defense.

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17. (U) BIO NOTES ON SEMEGAN: General Semegan's is also a quartermaster by specialty. He is currently Director of the Gendarmerie. Gbian, Degan, and Semegan are the first quartermasters to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Beninese Armed Forces.

18. (U) BIO NOTES ON LAFIA: General Lafia currently serves as the General Inspector of the Beninese Armed Forces.

19. (U) BIO NOTES ON OKE: General Oke is the current Deputy Chief of Staff of the Beninese Armed Forces.

(SBU) COMMENT: Generals Hessou and Boni are the first two military officers in Benin's history to be promoted to the rank of Major General. While the officers being promoted are undoubtedly deserving, the promotions also can be seen as an effort by President Yayi to solidify his support within the Beninese Armed Forces. END OF COMMENT.

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